IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 20 and 21 without prejudice or disclaimer as to the subject matter recited therein. Please replace claims 1, 4, 12, 16, 22, 29, and 30 with the amended claims below. A "marked-up" version of each amendment is included in **Attachment A**.

1. (Amended) A method for fabricating a shallow trench isolation region, comprising:

blanket depositing a trench fill material over a semiconductor topography comprising one or more trenches;

polishing the semiconductor topography with an abrasive polishing surface in the absence of a fluid or in the presence of a fluid that is substantially free of particulate matter to form an upper surface of the semiconductor topography at an elevation above the trenches, wherein the upper surface does not comprise a polish stop material; and

etching an entirety of the upper surface simultaneously, wherein remaining portions of the trench fill material are laterally confined within the trenches.

4. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of polishing comprises inserting the fluid consisting essentially of water between the semiconductor topography and the abrasive polishing surface.

12. (Amended) A method for processing a semiconductor topography, comprising:

polishing an upper layer of said semiconductor topography with an abrasive polishing surface in the absence of a fluid or in the presence of a fluid that is substantially free of particulate matter to form an upper surface of the semiconductor topography at an elevation above an underlying layer, wherein the underlying layer comprises a lateral variation in polishing characteristics; and

etching the entirety of the upper surface of the semiconductor topography simultaneously to expose the underlying layer.